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THE ARABIC PORTION OF THE CAIRO GENIZAH AT CAMBRIDGE.

(*Ninth Article.*)

XXIV.

A POEM ATTRIBUTED TO ALSAMAU'AL.

PAPER, one leaf 15×10 cm., *recto* 19 lines, *verso* 21 lines. The fragment to be discussed in the following pages is headed *Qaṣīde* by *AlSamau'al*. A title like this cannot fail to excite the keenest interest of students of ancient Arabic literature, assuming that the fragment can be proved to contain an authentic poem by the Jewish poet of Teimā. However uncritical it would be to treat it as such *prima facie*, it would be equally hasty to reject it without careful examination. It will, therefore, be best to set forth at once the evidence against the authenticity, and then collect the proofs in favour of the same.

There is no trace of this poem, or parts of it, in any collection of Old Arabic poetry, or works bearing on the subject, although one genuine poem and several doubtful ones of *AlSamau'al* have been handed down to us¹. The fragment is written in Hebrew characters, and contains

¹ See my "Essai sur l'histoire des Juifs de Médine," *R. É. J.*, VII, p. 176 sqq.

a comparatively large element of Jewish Agādā in its lines. In its vocabulary there are six words of Jewish character, the Arabic forms of which are first known to us from the Qurān. These words are *rahmān*¹ "merciful," *qurbān* "offering," *al fir'aun* "Pharaoh," *salwā* "quails," *mann* "manna," *mugaddas* "holy." Finally, in line 5 Abraham is alluded to as *khalīl* "friend [of God]," a term which occurs in the same connexion in Qor. IV, 124: "Allah chose Abraham as friend." Thus, although the poem may be old, a superficial examination would place it later than the Qurān, and it could therefore hardly be the work of the famous AlSamau'al b. Ādiyā.

On the other hand, it must first of all be admitted that in the heading of the poem no other person is *meant* than the poet of Teimā. No other person called AlSamau'al (with the article) is known in history, the name being an equivalent of *Samuel*. We know of two members of the Jewish tribe of the Banu Koreiza in Medīna who bore the same name, but in the form of *Shamwil*² (without the article). The poem itself belongs to the category of *fakhr*³, or heroic poetry, which also includes national and family glory. The famous five lines which made the poet proverbial for fidelity in Arabic literature are of the same character, as is also a poem ascribed to him, the authenticity of which is, however, doubtful. Now there is nothing improbable in the assumption that he also composed a song in praise of his faith and ancestral history. It appears even less unlikely if one recalls the fact that at that time Judaism was decidedly popular all over Arabia, and that many Arab tribes had been converted to the same. The immediate cause of its composition may have been rivalry

¹ It is, however, doubtful whether this word was used in the original; see the annotations to the translation.

² See *R. É. J.*, X, p. 11.

³ See ver. 10.

between his clan and some Christian Arabs in the north of the peninsula. The circumstance that the Arab littérateurs observe complete silence with regard to this poem does not speak at all against its authenticity. It stands in so sharp a contrast to the spirit of Islām that, had they known it, they would purposely have let it fall into oblivion or even destroyed it. Parallel instances of their having tampered with pre-Islamic poetry are not wanting¹.

If we now consider the obstacle caused by the five words mentioned above, we soon come to the conclusion that they prove nothing. If they occur in the Qorān, this only shows that Mohammed had learnt them from Jews to whom they were quite familiar, and it is by no means astonishing that they were introduced into a poem of thoroughly Jewish character. The same also applies to Abraham being styled the "friend of God." The Qorānic verse in question is but an adaptation of the words *Isaiah xli. 8*, "Abraham my friend." There was no profound knowledge of the Bible required to know of this passage, as it occurs in a popular *Haftārāh*, and was therefore familiar even to less learned Jews.

We possess a whole series of poems composed by Arabian Jews prior to Islām, but none of them shows any trace of Jewish character. It is not likely, however, that they should have completely abstained from writing religious poetry, because Jewish poetry was in all ages prominently religious. If none of them has come down to us, it is easily explained by the circumstance that all old Arabic poetry was handed from one generation to the other by oral tradition. The wholesale slaughter of Jews in the wars of Mohammed, and their final expulsion from the peninsula would account for the loss of this whole class of

¹ See Nöldeke, *Beiträge zur Kenntniss der Poesie der alten Araber*, p. 77. The poem in question is by a Jewish author.

poetry. It is not, however, altogether improbable that a few lines, displaying the talent of one of their best poets, were saved and, at a later period, committed to writing. The corrupt form of many words, and the employment of such which do not fit into the metre, is easily explained by the circumstance that the text was written down from memory. This is a feature which the poem has in common with the bulk of old Arabic poems, the texts of which are anything but certain.

Now the metrical form of the poem, as well as occasional words mainly used in old poetry, are two more points of evidence in favour of its authenticity. Although the copyist wrote the poem as one would write a prose piece, he cannot have been quite unconscious of its poetic form, as he marked the rhyme *li* by employing 'as *mater lectionis*'. Otherwise it is clear that he did not understand either the text or the metre. Proof of this is that at the end of line 17 there are two words too many. They are, however, only the remnant of a whole double line, fitting exactly, both as regards rhyme and metre.

There is still a word to be said on the elements of the Jewish *Agādā* dispersed through the poem. Line 5 is unfortunately not quite intelligible, but so much is clear that it contains an allusion to the Rabbinic legend of Abraham's rescue from the furnace, a legend 'which is reproduced in *Qorān* several times (XXI, 69; XXIX, 26). Line 6 not only refers to the offering up of Isaac, but also to the legend of the special creation of the ram, as recorded in *Abōth*, V, 6. Finally, line 19 alludes to the alleged twelve springs which poured forth from the rock mentioned in *Qor.* V, 160. (This is a combination of *Exod.* xv. 22 (*Mechiltā*) with xvii. 6.)

Now this display of Rabbinic lore, not all of which is reproduced in the *Qorān*, is so far removed from injuring

the authentic aspect of the poem, that it actually strengthens it. If we treat it as genuine, hypothetically, the poem represents the only Jewish document, hitherto known, which offers some little direct evidence of theological learning among the Arabian Jews in pre-Islamic times. Hitherto the only source for gaining an approximate estimation of this learning had been the Qurān, which, of course, allows but indirect inferences to be drawn. In AlSamau'al we would see a type of a Jew who was versed alike in the culture and arts of his Arab countrymen as well as in his own national literature. This double education gave his class that spiritual superiority which we find reflected in ancient Arab history as well as in the Qurān.

Finally, there is some interest attaching to the spelling of several words in the fragment. This reveals a certain looseness which agrees very well with the suggestion that the poem was penned from memory. If this was so, the writer was free to employ some vulgarisms which appear in Jewish Arabic writings even of the earliest epoch. Apart from the one in the rhyme mentioned before, there occur ליטח (l. 1) and אפסמה (lines 12 and 13), ואמנה (l. 7); בְּנֵי תְּלִי for בְּנֵי תְּלִי (l. 16), and a free interchange between אַלְוִי and אַלְתִּי, Hamza is entirely neglected.

The text published below is an exact reproduction of the original, except that it is brought into the proper form of a Qāṣida. In the transcription into Arabic characters, added for the benefit of readers less skilled in reading Arabic texts written in Hebrew characters, classic spelling has been restored as far as possible. The metre is *Tawīl*.

T-S. 6 Ka. 1¹.

בשםך רחמן הוה קצירה לנטמול

asmu נואבי לסת ענך בנאפלי רחמאנהם בשואה רודלאיל אכתחם רבינו צבוי אלתאלסלי להא אסתהסלמו חב אללה אלחמאלי ריאחין גנאת אלנץ אלדוואבלי ⁵ בראה בדיא לא נתן אלתיאתלי ואסמא אסראיל בכר אלאיויל למכבר פי אלעאנל ואלאנגן וחבאותם בפזאייל ונואייל ווישב נארא פי אלצלאע אלדוואבלי ¹⁰ וווקע פי אלחושא מות אלבלבלב [לי] לנו צרבת מצרא בעשר מנאכלי לנו נך אלפרעון יומ אלתחמאלי עאגניבה מע נדו אלטוחואצלי מון אלרחב פוק . . . אלחמאלי ¹⁵ נמאמה תצל להם טול אלמראהחל תנייר עסאכראם מון אלחוּפּ אלעאניל משבה אלצלאיל לנו פרג אלצזאן עזב אלמנאההלי פראתא וללא טעמה ניר חאייל ²⁰ ינדייהם אלבארי בבר אלמאכלי ולם יהונע לגעעל טרא אלגנאיל יניר אלרנא כאלגנכח ניר מאיל תדריך ללבנאר יומ אללאול שפרה אלבארי עלי כל טאייל ²⁵ ונאגא עליה עברחו וכבלימה אלא איה אלעפּ אלתי עאב סאדתי ואחצוי מנאקב קומה אלתאראם אבתאראם עקמא עואקר לילוי מון אלנאר ואלקראבן ואלמחן אלוי מהלא ביל צדר אלנאר חולה והאודא דביה . . . פדאה בכבשה ו[ה] אולדא ר'ס עצמאה ולצחה פאללה שרפהם بماם למ يولיהם אלא לעק בהם אלדין הדרהם אנטה לפבר יתרך אלקלב מלחה يولיהם וסואסא וויה הירת אלסנא בנו מזר אלמנבל אלתי אלסנא בנו אלבחר אלמפרק ואלוי ואברנה אלבורי אליל אלשעב כי רוי וכי מא יפוזו באנגנימה איה לאנסנא בנו אלקרים אללי נצחת להם מון אלשםס ואלאמטאר כאנת ציאנה אלסנא בנו אלטלוי מע אלמן ואלוי עלי עדר אלאסכאמת תנייר עיונהא וקר מכחו פי אלבר עמרן מגראד פלם יבל תוב מן לבאש עלייהםו ואנטזב נורא באעלמוור אמאמהם אלסנא בנו אלטור אלמקרים ואלוי אלס חטאטה באנגלי תדריל ונאגא עליה עברחו וכבלימה

هذه قصيدة للسموئل

الا ايها الصفي التى عاب سادتي
واحصى مناقب قومه اختارهم
اختارهم عقما عوائق للذى
من النار والقربان والمحن التى
فهذا خليل صير النار حولة
وهذا ذبيح (٤) فداء بكببشه
وهذا رئيس اسطفاه وخصه
فالله شرفهم بما لم يولهم (٥)
اولا لعى بهم الدين هداهم
أنصت لفخر يترك القلب يلؤها
وبيلهم وسواسا ويلبيح حيرة
السنا بنى المصر المنكك التى
السنا بنى البر المفرق والتى
واخرجه البارى الى الشعب كى يرى
وكى ما يفوزوا بالغنية اهلها
السنا بنى القدس الذى نسبت لهم
من الشمس والامطار كانت صيانة
.....
السنا بنى السلوى مع المن والذى
على عدد الاسياط تجرى عيونها
وقد مكثوا في البر عمرأ مجددا
فلم يبل ثوب من لباس عليهم
وانصب نورا كالعمود إمامهم
السنا بنى الطور المقدس والتى
اليس تطأطأ للجليل تذللا
ونجاها عليه عبدة وكليمه

TRANSLATION.

IN THY NAME OF MERCIFUL.

This is a Qasīda by Al-Samau' al.

- 1 O whom my lords blame (?),
Hear my voice, I am not unmindful of thee.
- 2 Let me recount the high qualities of a people which
Their God has chosen with signs and miracles.
- 3 He chose them from (?) a barren woman . . .
Whom my Lord distinguished on account of their pure descent (?).
- 4 From fire and sacrifice and trials to which
They submitted from perfect love of God (?).
- 5 The one is a friend around whom the fire produced
fragrant odours which covered the flexible twigs.
- 6 The other is . . . sacrifice which he redeemed by his lamb
which he created, but which was not the child of mountain
goats.
- 7 Then there is a prince whom he chose and distinguished,
And named him Israel the first-born.
- 8 God exalted them
. in this world and the next.
- 9 Did not religion attach to them to guide them,
And he covered (?) them with bounties and gifts.
- 10 . . . a glory which overflows the heart (?)
And kindles an inextinguishable fire in the bosom.
- 11 And it inspires whisper and illumines . . .
And casts into his vitals something akin to disquiet (?).
- 12 Are we not the people of Egypt which was chastised; we
For whose sake Egypt was struck by ten plagues?
- 13 Are we not the people of the divided sea, we
For whose sake Pharaoh was drowned on the day of (his) arduous
enterprise?
- 14 The Creator took the people out on the road,
That it might behold his wonders . . (?)

ANNOTATIONS TO THE TRANSLATION.

Verse 1 (a) seems to contain a kind of *nasib*. (b) Before נִסְמָע an iambic word to be supplied.

2. (a) *אנְחוֹרָה* קָמָה, against the metre. The second word might perhaps be read *דְּמָצָאָה*. (b) For *רוֹהָמָה* perhaps better to be read *רוֹהָמָה*.

3. (a) At the beginning perhaps וְ to be supplied. Instead of one might read וְאַתָּה and refer the hemistich to Gen. xi. 30. (b) An iambic word required at the beginning; for perhaps better חֲסָלִי.

4. (b) אלכאמל a syllable wanting.

6. (a) After **זביח** a syllable wanting.

7. (a) רִס probably refers to Gen. xxxii. 29, so does also (b).

8. (a) Perhaps פְּשָׁפָחָם אֶלְלָה, but the metre is not correct in both hemistichs.

9. (a) קָעֵל, perhaps קָלֵק (?) . (b) בְּפָנֵי אֵל a syllable too much.

10. (a) לְפָנָר, probably לְפָנָר, lit. leaves the heart behind; (b) lit. fixes a fire within the innermost ribs.

11. (a) חִיוָּה?

12. (a) See Exod. i. 12, 20.

14. (b) مع جودو is probably corruption of something like ئېجۇدۇ.

15. (a) Prob. גָּנְגָנָה (without the article); (b) a whole foot wanting. See Exod. xii. 35, 36.

16. (a) prob. נָלָ. (b) Probably to be read נָמָם חַמְלָהָם.

17. (b) For better to be read בְּגָנוֹתָם עַכְאַכְדָּהָם אַלְרָוּף (?) .

21. (a) מְגֻדָּא (?) .

22. (a) See Deut. viii. 4; xxix. 4. (b) תְּזִוִּינָ ? שְׁרָא ?

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